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This is the time of year when all kinds of wildlife are migrating
through the Old Dominion.

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I feel just as migratory. A week ago, I was enjoying a vacation in
Great Britain. Two weeks from now I'll be on the other side of our
Spaceship Earth--on an official trip to the Peoples Republic of China.
The effect on a boy who grew up on the north side of Detroit is somewhat
mind boggling.

So it is good to stand still for an evening among the people who
represent--and for generations have represented--the bedrock of conservation
in this country--the farmers, the landowners, and the small town folks
as well as the city-dwelling members of the Virginia Wildlife Federation's
conservationists all whom I came to know so well during my years as chief
of the Virginia Game Commission's education division and staff member of
the National Wildlife Federation. Even though tonight I have simply crossed
over a river from one part of a great metropolitan area to another,
psychologically, I feel very much at home. Your hospitality, always the
best, hasn't changed.

While others are passing conservation laws, funding them, administering
them, writing and talking about conservation--you are doing something about
it. We at the U.S. Department of Agriculture like to think we are helping you.

A man of the soil himself, the President knows where you are coming from.

At a time when many government programs are being scrutinized carefully
both outside the government and within an Administration bent on providing
efficient government and cutting the inflation rate, it was reassuring to
conservationists last year when the President told the Congress:

Remarks by Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for
Conservation, Research, and Education, at the Virginia Wildlife Federation's
annual conservation awards banquet in Alexandria, Va., Saturday, Oct. 21, 1978.

"Intelligent stewardship of the environment on behalf of all Americans is a prime responsibility of government."

His environmental message went on to stress three vital elements in our stewardship of natural resources: conservation in the use of our resources, wisdom in the variety of ways we use them, and caution in any disruption of natural ecosystems.

Only eight paragraphs addressed wildlife specifically, but all of the issues addressed in the message--such as water pollution, wilderness and management of private lands--are related to the well-being of fish and wildlife.

As a matter of fact, I'm convinced that the condition of our wildlife populations is a good measure of the quality of our stewardship of all the renewable natural resources in our land. I am as determined as you are to be a good steward.

For instance--

You know that USDA and Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service have implemented this year a set of guidelines for channel modification. Now, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) will plan and design watershed projects in such a way that they will not unduly impact on fish and wildlife--and may, in fact, enhance fish and wildlife habitat. Generally, this means channel modification will emerge only as a last resort. It's officially discouraged.

We've actually stopped the processing of some watershed projects this past summer so that FWS officials from state field offices and national headquarters could conduct thorough field reviews of biological concerns in the projects. And we've invited sportsmen's groups and other conservationists to look over our shoulders, to help us plan wisely and well.

SCS and local sponsors will adjust the plan where needed to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts on fish and wildlife habitat.

I call that teamwork. It portends better projects in the future.

You may be aware, too, of the more than 6,000 public meeting held this summer to help us appropriately implement the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (we call it simply the RCA). As you know, the RCA and its sister statute, the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act or (RPA) direct the USDA to appraise the condition of America's basic natural renewable resources every 5 years and to design and carry out programs which will protect and improve them. The Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act, the RPA and the RCA assure that wildlife will be given equal consideration with other land management outputs in the planning and execution of Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service programs in the future.

A quarter of a million have offered their suggestions for improvements in local, state, and national programs to meet natural resource concerns and aims.

Your federation secretary already may have received a summary of the findings from the more than 200 public RCA meetings held in Virginia. I'd be surprised if your ideas were not in that summary. I hope you will continue to communicate your suggestions to State Conservationist Dave Grimwood as the RCA soil and water appraisal and program move further along.

Soon you will have an opportunity to comment on a draft environmental impact statement issued in carrying out the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act. Although some important basic comments already have been gathered by the Forest Service from interest groups, the RPA forest and rangeland assessment for 1980 still looks forward to widespread participation by the general public.

As you know, the Forest Service has been strenuously engaged in another enterprise of particular interest to wilderness-related wildlife species and their friends: the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, or RARE II.

The opinions of close to a quarter of a million people will be weighed in this herculean effort to determine the future status--wilderness or otherwise--of 2,689 roadless areas across the country.

We in the Department of Agriculture look upon our responsibilities as a golden opportunity to enhance wildlife and fish habitat. The Soil Conservation Service alone works with more than 2 million private landowners and managers. The Forest Service not only administers 187 million acres in the National Forest System, but cooperates with the States to assist private owners of another 631 million acres.

That's a lot of wildlife habitat, and a wealth of opportunity.

We have made the realization of that opportunity a primary goal of Secretary Bob Bergland's USDA.

For example, I have worked with the Forest Service to develop new policy direction for that agency which strengthens the emphasis given wildlife and fish management programs and integrates wildlife considerations into other aspects of its resource management.

Under this new Forest Service, USDA, policy:

- (1) Wildlife will be emphasized in program development.
- (2) Wildlife expertise will be required on multidisciplinary teams that address issues affecting wildlife or fish.
- (3) Wildlife and fish goals and objectives will be spelled out in land management plans, and we will establish controls to assure compliance with these goals on the ground.
- (4) We will be reviewing our cooperative relations with State wildlife and fish agencies and, where we encounter problems, we will resolve them.
- (5) We will be working closely with State wildlife agencies to assure that all of our planning endeavors involving wildlife and fish habitat are coordinated with the State plans. We recognize the States bear the responsibility for these populations of wildlife and fish. You know how

well we've worked together over the years on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests.

(6) Where possible, we will try to remove endangered and threatened plant and animal species from that status by protecting and improving their habitats.

(7) We will devise a uniform system for classifying and assessing wildlife and fish habitat, plus a storage and retrieval system for information on wildlife and fish, with their respective habitat associations.

(8) And we will establish a research program that will fill the gaps in our knowledge of fish and wildlife habitat requirements.

This new wildlife policy is part of our continuing efforts to assure balance in the natural resource programs of the department.

While waterfowl refuges on public land are the nucleus of the national waterfowl conservation effort, they can't do the whole job alone. A major part of the nation's waterfowl habitat is provided on private land, usually in close association with agriculture. Farmers in Virginia's soil and water conservation districts last year alone did waterfowl habitat improvement work on more than 5,000 acres of wetland and 2,700 upland acres.

USDA is striving to improve its ability to help farmers blend food and fiber production needs with the needs of wildlife.

One way is by more carefully inventorying where wetlands are and what options they have for use and management. This summer the Soil Conservation Service had a series of meetings with the Fish and Wildlife Service to improve the compatibility of our prime farmland studies with their inventory of wetlands of the Nation. We are aiding the FWS by providing soils information and by fine-tuning the checklist for deciding whether an area is a functioning aquatic ecosystem or is prime or unique farmland that used to be wetland.

Beginning October 1, SCS also began using a fresh, streamlined, flexible approach to conservation planning for individual landowner-cooperators. The new procedures will enable SCS district conservationists to spend more time with more landowners out on the land. They will be able to help suburban as well as rural landowners do more planning, not less...to affect more acres to improve more wildlife habitat along with water quality, food and fiber production, and other aims.

The major differences are two:

--Each "farm plan" doesn't have to be a polished, complex document that takes buckets of office time to draw and type...it only needs to be as detailed or formal as the landowner wants to aid his conservation work.

--No plan is the final product of our assistance. SCS will work harder to follow up with each landowner to help him or her install the conservation practices that were decided on...and to maintain those practices once they are on the land so they continue to do their environmental improvement job.

USDA is moving on several other fronts to shore up our ability to get conservation applied on the land. We have changed our watershed management assistance policies to reaffirm that land treatment and other nonstructural actions are equal partners with structural measures. Watershed plans contain only land treatment, such as terracing, now are not only acceptable...they are encouraged.

Where dams are needed, they won't be constructed until at least 50 percent of the land treatment needed upstream from them is in place. As incentive for that, we now will provide accelerated cost-sharing--and the list of eligible practices has been expanded to include longterm erosion control practices, water conservation and water quality, and fish

and wildlife habitat. These policies are to be used for all projects approved after September 30.

This month we published final regulations for the Rural Clean Water Program, under the Clean Water Act of 1977. We reviewed almost 500 letters on the draft regulations, with more than 1,500 individual comments. This program, as yet unfunded, provides the framework for aiding thousands of landowners in placing conservation improvements on the land in high-priority watersheds where they can contribute strongly to solving water quality problems downstream.

Under the new Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, we have published our final regulations for a Rural Abandoned Mine Program and expect to sign our first contract of assistance with a landowner early next year. The coal was needed--but not the environmental scars that its harvest left behind--in southwest Virginia, for example. We know how to make those mined acres useful again for man and wildlife--and we are going to help landowners do it.

Studies made by USDA's Science and Education Administration (SEA) on the reclamation of strip-mined land in Virginia show that good yields of high quality forage are produced when topsoil is applied to the spoil after the mining operation. The forage provides good wildlife food and cover as well as livestock feed.

Long-term studies made by SEA in Virginia on strip-mine spoils show that introduced species of legumes and forages persist when the seedlings are made on sites mulched with wood chips. Once these ideally-suited plant species are released, they can be obtained through commercial nurseries by anyone who wants to work with SCS in evaluating species for land reclamation or wildlife habitat. Just get in touch with Dave Grimwood.

In all of these programs we welcome your suggestions and your participation. We appreciate your encouragement of landowners and SCS

The draft regulations require an integration of planning for all uses of the National Forests and National Grasslands--an ecosystem approach. And the plans that result as these regulations are implemented should go far in reflecting both the needs of the local public, and the concerns of others, through constraints representing national goals and objectives.

Each national forest plan will be developed by an interdisciplinary team--including a wildlife specialist--and in coordination with other Federal and State agencies.

Under these regulations, our resource managers on the ground will be documenting their wildlife and fish goals as part of the planning process. They will be stating the desired future condition of resident populations, and the amount and quality of the habitat which supports them.

And these regulations will incorporate the "life forms" concept into our interdisciplinary planning. Our resource managers will be selecting indicator species of fish and wildlife which are resident in a planning area, and whose population trends indicate effects of resource management activities on a number of other species as well.

This will greatly improve our ability to integrate wildlife and fish considerations into our other resource management activities which may involve manipulation of wildlife habitat.

Our ability to do this scientifically, however, is sometimes constrained by our lack of knowledge about the minimum habitat requirements of many wildlife and fish species. We know more about the life histories and behavior of many species than we do about their habitat requirements.

That is a major research challenge in the wildlife field: to identify and quantify the habitat requirements for a wider range of fish and wildlife species.

Once that research hurdle is jumped, we will be able to do an even better job of predicting the impacts of various land uses on fish and

employees through your award program, run as part of the National Wildlife Federation's nationwide award program.

"The way to game abundance," Wallace Grange said in his book by that title which I used as a text in my undergraduate wildlife management courses, "is not a journey to a far off place but an adventure with land, plants, and animals in our locality."

We need only examine the intent of legislation enacted since the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960 to see that the public wants balance in the use of its resources. And it wants fish and wildlife in its close-to-home environments as well as in the "boondocks."

Passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act and the related National Forest Management Act, the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act, and the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act are visible manifestations of that desire for resource balance. The legislation already passed by the 95th Congress, coupled with ongoing action on Alaskan national interest lands, have underlined this desire for resource balance. And recent authorizations of urban parks and urban forestry programs have underlined interest in geographic balance.

Our best means of assuring this balance in USDA programs is through land and resource planning, with our planning processes open to all interested "publics."

The Forest Service, for example, recently issued draft regulations for land and resource management planning in the National Forest System, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. These regulations were developed with the advice of a Committee of Scientists, established by the law to insure an interdisciplinary approach to planning. And they are being developed with intensive participation by the public. They will be tangible proof of our commitment to fish and wildlife habitat enhancement.

wildlife habitats. And we will be able to develop new means of improving those habitats, to increase the quality and the diversity of our wildlife and fish resource.

We in the Department of Agriculture are committed to the concept that States regulate the wildlife and that Federal resource managers manage the habitat on Federal lands. I already have mentioned the coordination of Federal plans with those of the States. This is essential if we are to provide the populations and kinds of wildlife where they are needed to meet the public's desires.

It also is essential that this coordination continue on the ground; that the professionals who manipulate wildlife habitat work hand-in-hand with the professionals who regulate wildlife populations. Perhaps that's another perspective gleaned from my experience in Virginia, where cooperation always has been excellent.

I've always admired the closeness with which Virginia Game Commission biologists work with Forest Service resource managers on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. The Virginia General Assembly started a good thing, 40 years ago, with the National Forest hunting and fishing stamps. Both the public and the wildlife resource on the two forests obviously have benefited.

In 1977, for example, these stamps yielded about \$180,000 to be spent on the National Forests in Virginia. And the State supplemented that with other funds to spend a total \$610,000 for direct wildlife and fish management on the two forests in 1978.

In terms of productivity, this means we stocked 391,000 fish in streams and lakes on National Forest land, constructed 106 waterholes where lack of surface water restricted wildlife populations, and completed more than 1,300 acres of direct habitat improvement during fiscal year 1978. And the funds

financed exclusively eighteen full-time State wildlife biologists who worked on National Forests to help integrate sound wildlife and fish practices into our resource programs.

This is what it takes to really have a quality resource management program which is balanced, and which effectively delivers the products and services that people want from their public land. It takes cooperation, and you've provided a model for it, here in Virginia.

There are disagreements I recognize. There were 16 years ago and there always will be. There should be. They come from people caring about the resource, about the quality of our stewardship, and about the condition those resources will be in when our children and grandchildren must rely upon them and can enjoy them. Those are complex concerns, and there are many different approaches to their resolution. By working together, perhaps we can find the best, and make it work.

The Virginia Wildlife Federation must continue to play its important role in alerting citizens to the mission and capabilities of government agencies in the field of natural resources. Far too few people know that a simple phone call or letter can bring technical advice which will yield better farm wildlife habitat, more forest production, and greater opportunities to enjoy wildlife and fishery resources.

Not only are public servants willing and able to provide more service to citizens than they do now, but professionals will respond to increased public demands by improving their programs. Therefore, citizen groups such as the Virginia Wildlife Federation and all other National Wildlife Federation affiliates have the vital role of alerting the public to opportunities and stimulating agencies by direct contacts on the personal level.

John Gardner once said that a Nation is never finished. You can't build it, and then just leave it standing there. It must be built and rebuilt, recreated in each generation by men and women who believe and care.

Now it's our turn. If we don't care what we do, or if we don't truly believe in what we are doing, the road ahead is arduous. But if we do believe in what we are doing--in the potential of our programs--and if we do care enough to work together to improve them and make them fully effective, their worth and effectiveness will be readily apparent in the beauty and fruitfulness of our land.

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